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SOCIAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS: HUMAN RIGHTS

Extract from the report of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on its twenty-fifth session

Programme budget implications of the recommendation to reduce the number of sessions and pre-sessional working group meetings from three to two per year in 2002-2003

Statement submitted by the Secretary-General in accordance with rule 31 of the rules of procedure of the Economic and Social Council

A. Request of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights contained in the Committee's recommendation (see E/2001/L.8)

1. By its decision 1999/287 of 30 July 1999, the Economic and Social Council, concerned that existing meeting arrangements for the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights no longer permitted the Committee to fully discharge its responsibilities under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and Council resolution 1985/17 of 28 May 1985 in an efficient and timely manner, approved the holding of two additional three-week extraordinary sessions of the Committee, as well as respective pre-sessional working groups of one week's duration during 2000 and 2001, provided additional funding was made available; requested that those sessions be entirely used for the consideration of reports of the

States parties in order to reduce the backlog of reports; and requested the Committee to consider ways and means to improve the efficiency of its working methods and to report to the Council in 2001 on the actions taken in this regard. The General Assembly, in section IV of its resolution 54/251 of 23 December 1999, endorsed the Council decision.

2. In response to the request by the Council, the Committee, at its twenty-fifth session, held from 23 April to 11 May 2001, discussed a number of improvements on its working methods with a view to dealing more effectively with the consideration of State parties' reports at its future sessions. As a result, the Committee has adopted revised methods on a provisional basis, pending evaluation of the new procedures later in the year, in time for the annual report to be submitted in December 2001. Based on the review of its methods of work, the Committee is of the opinion that, for an experimental period of two years, it should hold, as in the past, only two sessions per year, one in April/May and one in November/December.

B. Modifications to the approved programme of work for the biennium 2002-2003

3. The activities referred to above fall under programme 19, Human rights, of the medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005, and under section 22, Human rights, sub-section A, Policy-making organs, and section 2, General Assembly affairs and conference services, Conference and Library Services, Geneva, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003.

4. It is envisaged that the recommendation would curtail the following activities per year:

(a) One pre-sessional working group meeting, which would be expected to convene for a duration of one week;

(b) One committee session, which would be expected to convene for a duration of three weeks;

5. In order to reflect the provisions of the recommendation, the narrative of section 22 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003 would be modified as follows:

A. Policy-making organs

Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Paragraph 22.19

Replace the last sentence with the following sentence: "At its twenty-fifth session, the Committee adopted revised working methods, as a result of which the Committee, on an experimental period of two years, would hold, as in the past, only two sessions per year."

C. **Programme of Work**

Subprogramme 2

Supporting human rights bodies and organs

Outputs

Paragraph 22.40 (a)

(v) Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Under "a. Substantive servicing of meetings", replace "Plenary meetings (120)" with "Plenary meetings (80)", and replace "meetings of its pre-sessional working group (40)" with "meetings of its pre-sessional working group (28)".

C. **Estimates of resource requirements**

6. The reduction of the number of meetings from three to two each year would result in savings as follows:

	(US dollars)	
	Per year	**Per biennium**
Section 22, Human rights		
Travel and DSA of 18 members of the Committee	(161 600)	
DSA for five members of the pre-sessional working group	(8 800)	
Total section 22	(170 400)	(340 800)
Section 2, General Assembly affairs and conference services		
Pre-sessional working group		
(a) Meeting services (10 meetings, E, F, R, S)	(32 700)	
(b) Pre-session documentation (18 documents, 600 pages, E, F, R, S)	(407 000)	
(c) Post-session documentation (6 documents, 40 pages, E, F, R, S)	(32,700)	
(d) Other requirements	(3 000)	
Subtotal	(475 400)	(950 800)
Session of the Committee (3 weeks annually)		
(a) Meeting services (30 meetings, A, E, F, R, S)	(88 300)	
(b) Pre-session documentation (5 documents, 50 pages, A, E, F, R, S)	(34 200)	
(c) In-session documentation (10 documents, 90 pages, A, E, F, R, S)	(69 200)	
(d) Summary records (E, F, S)	(85 300)	

(e) Post-session documentation (6 documents, 30 pages, A, E, F, R, S)		(25 800)	
(g) Other requirements		(17 800)	
	Subtotal	(320 600)	(641 200)
	Total section 2	**(796 000)**	**(1 592 000)**

D. Summary

9. Should the Economic and Social Council endorse the revised working methods adopted by the Committee, in particular to hold, for an experimental period of two years, only two sessions per year, costs would be avoided and the resources proposed under section 22, Human rights, of the programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003 for the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, would therefore be reduced by $340,800.

10. The estimated reduction in costs of US$ 1,592,000 per biennium for conference-servicing is based on a full cost assumption. In line with the established methodology for budgeting conference services, the total provisions for section 2, General Assembly affairs and conference services, will be determined only after the adoption of the calendar of conferences for the biennium 2002-2003.

11. The General Assembly will be advised of this statement of programme budget implications upon its consideration of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003 for section 22, Human rights, and for section 2, General Assembly affairs and conference services.